THE RESPONDER
TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE • JERRY PATTERSON, COMMISSIONER
OIL SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROGRAM • MARCH 2012

Mysterious Beach Debris

The origins of a 5 foot by 5 foot fender that recently arrived at Sabine Pass on the Sea Rim State Park portion of the beach was a mystery. It was discovered on the beach by the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program during a routine vehicle patrol. The only identifying feature on the fender was a name: "Marine Fenders International." Anchor Marine & Industrial Supply, a Houston-area firm that sells fenders, could not identify the owner because no company name or serial numbers were found on the object. After some discussion, Texas Parks & Wildlife Sea Rim State Park employees agreed to lend their tractor to remove the fender from the beach, and Anchor Marine sent a flatbed truck to take it to its Houston yard and continue the search for an owner. To date, the owner has not been identified.

A state park tractor loads the fender onto the distributor's truck.

Another Successful Clean Gulf Conference

The 21st annual Clean Gulf Conference wrapped up at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio on December 1. The three-day event was attended by more than 2,000 participants and featured 281 exhibitors and over 90 sponsors. Keynote presentations were made by Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson and U.S. Coast Guard Rear Admiral Paul Zukunft, Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship.

The theme for the conference was "Looking Ahead to a Brighter Future," which reflected the challenges that face industry and governmental agencies working to protect our environment. Two days of informative and challenging panel discussions built upon the conference theme.

The next Clean Gulf Conference will be in New Orleans from November 13-15, 2012, at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. We look forward to seeing you there so make your plans now.

Drill Hosted in South Texas

NuStar Energy recently conducted its annual oil spill and equipment deployment drill at the Harlingen terminal and pipeline. The drill focused on Incident Command System stand-up and the deployment of oil spill response equipment. Implementation of these two major components created a great opportunity for industry, state, and federal agencies to work together before an actual event occurs.

After months of collaborative planning by NuStar Energy's Environmental Coordinator, Robert Munguia Jr., the O'Brien's Group, and the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program (GLO), a scenario was created to integrate the responses of multiple agencies. The scenario consisted of a pipeline rupture, resulting in 6,000 barrels of diesel fuel being released into the Arroyo Colorado.

NuStar Energy deployed 18-inch containment boom in the Arroyo Colorado to demonstrate how boom is towed and set for oil spill containment. The GLO set up a TDS-136 Drum Skimmer and bird scare cannons to display the functionality of the equipment. Equipment training was also conducted for chemical response and remediation contractors as well as for NuStar Energy personnel.

Participating along with the GLO were the U.S. Coast Guard, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, U.S. Department of Transportation-Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration, chemical response and remediation contractors, and Texas Conestoga Rover Associates, Inc. Thanks to the efforts of all the participants, an efficient and timely response was achieved, providing valuable experience for handling actual spills.

NuStar training its personnel on response equipment.

Farewell to Oil Spill Scientist Buzz Martin

Dr. Buzz Martin.

After nearly 20 years with the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program, Dr. Buzz Martin left in January to accept a position with Shell Global Solutions in Houston. Buzz served as State Scientific Support Coordinator and ran the program's $1.25 million annual research and development program. His contributions to the program are numerous, but some are especially impressive.

In the mid-1990s, Buzz began work on the conceptual design and construction of the first versions of the Oil Spill Prevention and Response Atlas series. His work culminated with the 1995 publication of the upper and lower coast atlases. For the first time, response personnel were provided comprehensive and detailed information about sensitive coastal resources and habitats in map form for the entire Texas coast.

After the early atlas series were printed, Buzz began exploring the idea of producing the atlas on CD-ROMs. This culminated in the publication of the first "Toolkit" in 1999. In the 13 years since, each edition has been updated and expanded and includes an incredible array of spill response job aids and response planning information.

Over the course of his career with the program, Buzz has provided superb input and guidance as the program's state scientific support coordinator. He has been involved with virtually every major incident in which Oil Spill was tasked with protecting the state's interests. Some of the more significant incidents include the San Jacinto River flooding and pipeline spills in 1994, the "Buffalo 292" spill in Galveston Bay in 1996, the "New Amity" spill in Galveston Bay in 2001, the "Torm Mary" spill in the Sabine/Neches Waterway in 2004, the "DBL 152" offshore spill in 2005, Hurricane Rita in 2005, the Valero Inner Harbor Spill in Corpus Christi in 2006, Hurricane Ike in 2008, and the "Eagle Otome" spill in the Sabine/Neches Waterway in 2010.

Another of Buzz's signature accomplishments was development of the Texas Automated Buoy System (TABS), a series of fully instrumented buoys off the state's coast that provide real-time observations of the Gulf of Mexico. This information is fed into hydrodynamic models that predict the movement of oil in order to provide responders a leg-up on calculating landfall or deploying offshore response resources.

Buzz and his solutions-oriented approach to his work exemplify the best of public service. His unwavering dedication to his job and colleagues is greatly appreciated.

GLO Names New Scientific Support Coordinator and R&D Director

With the departure of long-time employee Buzz Martin, program management selected Senior Response Officer Steve Buschang from the Corpus Christi field office to fill the Scientific Support Coordinator position. Buschang has over 13 years of service with the General Land Office, serving in both the Oil Spill Prevention and Response and Professional Services programs. He has an undergraduate degree in biology/marine biology and a master's in environmental science. Steve spent most of January training with Martin in an effort to smooth the transition into his new position.

GLO Honors Famous Marine Scientist

The legendary Dr. Robert Ballard was recently honored by the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program for his outstanding contributions to the schoolchildren of Texas. Senior Response Officer Johnny Darcey presented the proclamation on behalf of the GLO. Ballard, a professor of oceanography at the University of Rhode Island, founded the Jason Project—named for the mythological Greek hero—in response to thousands of letters he received from students wanting to be part of his expeditions. His discovery of the Titanic tapped a wellspring of scientific curiosity, and he was determined to sustain it.

The Jason Project uses a year-long curriculum based on different scientific subjects each year. Through teleconferencing, the students get to interact with researchers in the field on a real-time basis, fueling their desire to learn more. The Jason Alliance of Southeast Texas started the local program, which attracts over 22,000 students yearly along with 220 teachers.

Johnny Darcey presents an award to Dr. Robert Ballard.

GLO Attends Career Days

Educating youth about oil spill prevention is one of the major objectives of the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program. Administrative Assistant Santana Rangel and Response Officer Gonzalo Pena visited fourth- and fifth-grade students from Benavidez Elementary in Brownsville. The students were educated in spill response, response equipment, and overall environmental awareness.

Senior Response Officer Craig Kartye and Response Officer Colton Rohloff attended the Keller Middle School Career Day. The responders presented a slideshow about the Oil Spill program that included goals, daily activities and career opportunities, and a desk top skimmer demonstration was also held. Both events were great opportunities to inform schoolchildren about the program and career opportunities, and to inspire them to protect the coast.

Training takes place at Padre Balli Park

Tar mat found on the Coastal Bend.

Motivated by tar washing up on Coastal Bend beaches, the Nueces County Parks and Recreation Department (NCPRD) played host for Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program (GLO) and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Team (SCAT) training on December 6.

The GLO and the USCG discussed the importance of SCAT training, terminology and application during the introductory training course targeting beach maintenance crews.

SCAT plays an important role in responding to an oil spill by providing information on shoreline habitats, the degree of oiling, and determining the appropriate response and cleanup strategies. The process provides standard definitions and a systematic approach for data collection and facilitates effective decision making to meet cleanup objectives. SCAT objectives discussed included shoreline type descriptions, developing a shoreline survey form, strategies for segmenting shorelines, pre-approval for the use of cleanup techniques, cleanup priorities, and general guidelines for cleanup endpoints.

NCPRD personnel were taught how to estimate the amount of oiling on beaches and jetties, and shown how to predict where buried oil may be by visually inspecting and sketching beach profiles in the field. Both the Land Office and the USCG offered suggestions on informational tools and basic field equipment that are useful for assessing an impacted area.

GLO Response Officer Brent Koza passed out GLO Toolkits—viewable online at http://wwwdb.glo.state.tx.us/oilspill/Atlas/masterpage.pdf—and aids on how to fill out forms involved with the shoreline cleanup process. The toolkit contains a vast amount of information, including cleanup guidance, habitat sensitivity maps, Area Contingency Plans (ACPs), response atlases, the South Texas Tarball Response Plan, and Waste Disposal Plans.

Studies have shown that at least two times the amount of oil spilled during the Exxon Valdez incident seeps naturally into the Gulf of Mexico every year—more than 22 million gallons from over 600 locations.

Introductory SCAT training is available upon request to the GLO or the USCG in Corpus Christi. State and Federal trustees are encouraged to attend to learn the basics or refresh their knowledge on shoreline cleanup assessment techniques.

Koza discusses SCAT objectives.

Unified Command Basics

Starting in the 1970s, the Incident Management System has been used in emergency events around the country. The oil spill community adopted the Incident Command System and many people were trained in the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS), which years later evolved into the present day National Incident Management System (NIMS). This system, as it was intended, has worked successfully in Texas for many years, thanks to ongoing relationships developed within the oil spill community. Coming together for the first time during a major event is sometimes unavoidable, but with planning and a little effort today, we can be better prepared for the event that occurs tomorrow.

It's extremely important to have knowledge of your area's federal, state and local governments and industry response capabilities prior to an oil spill event. Following are three examples of working relationship opportunities with your oil spill partners.

1. Hold an open house for responders. Let the response community know who you are and what you will bring to the table. Hold a group walk-through of all appropriate operations. The thought behind this practice is to help responders become familiar with your agency or company before an event occurs.

2. Drill as you would for the real thing. We should make a genuine effort to have the actual personnel who will respond for an event fill the positions of the Unified Command. Sending whoever is available at the time to a drill won't foster relationship building with your agency or company.

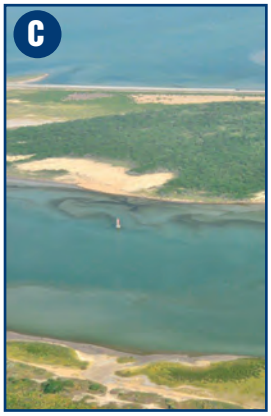
3. Learn ICS. If we can speak the same language, communications between the responders will go smoothly. You must understand your role within the Unified Command. Train to the level of your ICS position. Many NIMS courses are available in your area, and some are free of charge. Filling a position with an inexperienced and untrained representative has the potential for failure.

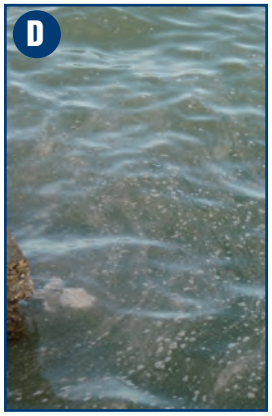
Incident Commanders within the Unified Command make joint decisions and speak as one voice. Any differences are worked out within the Unified Command, contributing toward unity within the Incident Command. If someone goes outside the Unified Command, the damage may be irreversible. If we follow the Unified Command approach the results will be a shared understanding of priorities and limitations, a unified set of incident objectives, shared and understood strategies, better internal and external information flow, less duplication of efforts, improved resource use, and ultimately a less costly event.

Unified Command in action.

What is it?

Have you ever seen something odd and wondered "What is that?" At the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Program we respond to a lot of calls concerning mysterious substances. Some of these are oil, some are chemicals, and some are unidentifiable during the initial investigation. When we encounter these unknown substances we team up with our state and federal response partners to identify them as soon as possible. Most of these mystery substances turn out to be biological: algae, sea foam, oxygen depleted soil, etc. The problem with these biological substances is they often resemble oil products. If you ever encounter an unknown substance in the water call our spill number—1-800-832-8224—as soon as possible. Below are a few photos of biological substances; see if you can identify them.





Key: A. Brown algae bloom or Brown Tide; B. Sargassum in Gulf of Mexico; C. Red algae bloom or Red Tide; D. Diatom bloom; E. Algae bloom; F. Red Tide trapped on the beach; G. Red Tide; H. Decaying seaweed and oxygen depleted sand.

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Report oil spills
1-800-832-8224
24 hours

The Responder is published by the Texas General Land Office.
Questions and comments may be submitted to Angela Jarvis
via email at angela.jarvis@glo.texas.gov
or by phone at 281-470-6597.

Upcoming Meetings

Central Texas Coastal Area Committee Meeting

will be held March 8. For more information contact the La Porte Field Office at 281-470-6597.

South Texas Coastal Zone Area Committee

meeting will be held on May 8. For more information contact the Corpus Christi Field Office at 361-825-3300.

Central Texas Coastal Area Committee Meeting

will be held June 7. For more information contact the La Porte Field Office at 281-470-6597.